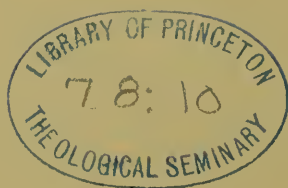


William Meade

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A Brief Review of the  
Episcopal Church in Vir-  
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Present Time.

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A, BRIEF REVIEW

OF THE

EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VIRGINIA,

FROM ITS FIRST ESTABLISHMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME;

BEING PART OF AN ADDRESS

OF THE

RIGHT REV. WILLIAM MEADE, D.D.,

BISHOP OF VIRGINIA,

TO THE

CONVENTION OF THE CHURCH, IN FREDERICKSBURG,

*May 22nd, 1845.*

RICHMOND:

PRINTED BY WM. MACFARLANE, "SOUTHERN LIT. MESSENGER" OFFICE.

1845.



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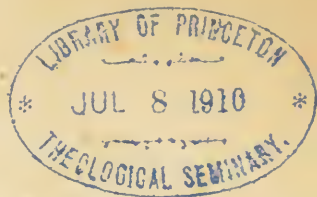
Presented by *A. G. Cameron, Ph.D.*

*Division* ... *BX5918*

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A BRIEF REVIEW  
OF THE  
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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It is an useful employment for societies, as well as individuals, at certain seasons, to look back through their past history and mark the dealings of a kind Providence towards them. The History of the Episcopal Church of Virginia has, by universal consent, been, from the very beginning, a most interesting and eventful one—beyond that of any other Diocese in the union. I would briefly refer to some of its particulars, in order to raise our hearts in gratitude to God for its wonderful preservation, and to make us more faithful and zealous in using the proper means for its further advancement.

The Episcopal Church of Virginia commenced with the first settlement of the first colony. The code of laws of that colony was drawn up at a time when “religion, (as Bishop Taylor expresses it,) was painted upon banners,” for it was “*divine, martial and moral*,” all in one, being enforced even among Protestants by civil pains and penalties, which we would fain now banish from our recollections, and blot from the page of history.

That there was much of sincere piety moving the hearts of those who incorporated the forms of the Episcopal Church with the colony of Virginia, as well as of those who established other forms among the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, I doubt not. Nor do I question the piety and fidelity of some of the people and pastors during its whole subsequent history. But that its spiritual condition was ever, at any time, even tolerably good, bearing a comparison with that of the Mother Church, over whose defects also there was so much cause to mourn, faithful history forbids us to believe. Many were the disadvantages under which she had to labor, during the whole period of her existence in connexion with the Government of England, which were well calculated to sink her character beneath that of the Church of England, and of some other Churches in America. Immense were the difficulties of getting a full supply of ministers of any character; and of those who came, how few were faithful and duly qualified for the station. One who was indeed so faithful as to be called the Apostle of Virginia, at an early period of its settlement, lamenting over the want of ministers in the Colony, thus upbraids those who refused to come. “Do they not either wilfully hide their talents, or keep themselves

at home for fear of losing a few pleasures. Be not there any among them of Moses and his mind, and of the apostles, who forsook all to follow Christ?" The Council of Virginia also addressed the most solemn and pathetic appeals to the Clergy of England, beseeching them to come over to the work of the Lord in the Colony—though it is to be feared with little success—for in the year 1665 it is recorded, that many places were destitute of ministers, and like still to continue so, the people not paying their "accustomed dues." There were at this time about fifty parishes in the Colony, most of which were destitute of clergymen, as there were only ten ministers for their supply. To remedy this evil, it was proposed to establish in the English Universities Virginia fellowships, imposing it as a condition, that the fellows spend seven years in Virginia; but we do not read of its execution.

That the ministers then in the Colony were men of zeal can scarce be supposed, as a law was required enjoining it upon them to preach constantly every Sabbath and administer the sacrament at least twice every year.

If we proceed in the history of the Colony another fifty years, which will carry us beyond the first century of its existence, we shall find only a few more parishes established, and though glebes and parishes had been provided, not more than one half of the congregations were supplied with ministers, the rest being served by lay-readers. In some places indeed lay readers were preferred to settled ministers, because less expensive to the parishioners. The tenure by which ministers held their livings was precarious, and this contributed to the negligence of some, and was a severe trial to the fidelity of the more worthy. If a clergyman was faithful to his duty and preached against the vices of the people, he was removed; "and instances are numerous of clergyman having been displaced by vestries without a charge made, or even a reason assigned for it."\* The effect of this on the better portion of the English Clergy who might be disposed to emigrate need not be stated. As to the unworthy and hireling Clergy of the Colony, there was no ecclesiastical discipline to correct or punish their irregularities and vices. The authority of a Commissary was a very insufficient substitute for the superintendence of a faithful Bishop. The better part of the Clergy, and some of the laity, long and earnestly petitioned for a faithful resident Bishop, for the Bishop of London was of necessity only the nominal Bishop.

For about two hundred years did the Episcopal Church of Virginia try the experiment of a system, whose constitution required such an head, but was actually without it. No such officer was there, as the Church requires, to watch over the conduct, and punish the vices of the Clergy; none to administer the rite of Confirmation, and thus admit the faithful to the Supper of the Lord.

It must be evident, that the Episcopal Church without such an officer is more

\* Dr. Hawkes' history of the Church of Virginia, from which interesting and faithful work the facts embodied in this statement are taken.



likely to suffer for the want of Godly discipline, than any other society of Christians, because all others have some substitute, whereas our own Church makes this office indispensable to some important parts of ecclesiastical government and discipline.

Such being the corrupt state of the Church in Virginia, it is not wonderful that here, as in England, disaffection should take place and dissent begin. The preaching and zeal of Mr. Whitfield, who visited Virginia about this time, contrasted with the sermons and lives of the Clergy generally, contributed no doubt to increase disaffection. The pious Mr. Davies, afterwards President of Princeton College, made the first serious inroad upon the unity of the Church. His candid testimony deserves to be here introduced. "I have reason to hope," he says, "that there are and have been a few names in various parts of the Colony who are sincerely seeking the Lord, and groping after religion in the communion of the Church of England." "Had the doctrines of the Gospel been solemnly and faithfully preached in the established Church, I am persuaded there would have been few dissenters in these parts of Virginia, for their first objections were not against the peculiar rites and ceremonies of that church, much less against her excellent articles, but against the general strain of the doctrines delivered from the pulpit, in which these articles were opposed, (or which was the more common case,) not mentioned at all, so that at first they were not properly dissenters from the original constitution of the Church of England, but the most strict adherents to it, and only dissented from those who had forsaken it."

That there was at this time not only defective preaching, but, as might be expected, most evil living among the Clergy, is evident from a petition of the Clergy themselves to the Legislature, asking an increase of salary saying, "that the small encouragement given to Clergymen is a reason why so few come into this Colony from the Universities, and that so many who are a disgrace to the ministry find opportunities to fill the parishes."

It is a well established fact, that some who were discarded from the English Church, yet obtained livings in Virginia.

Such being the case, who can question for a moment the entire accuracy of the account, both of the preaching and living of the Clergy of his day, as given by the faithful and zealous Mr. Jarrett, and who could blame him for the encouragement afforded to the disciples of Mr. Wesley, at a time when neither he, nor they, thought there could be a separation from the Church of England.

Dissent, from various causes, was now spreading through the commonwealth; dissatisfaction with the Mother Country and Mother Church was increasing, and the Episcopal Clergy losing more and more the favor of God and man, when this devoted minister, almost alone in preaching and living according to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church, was glad to avail him-

self of any aid in the good work he was endeavoring to perform. For the time, however, his efforts were unavailing. The war of the Revolution was approaching, and with it the downfall of the Church.

Many circumstances contributed to this event. The severities exercised towards some of the dissenters in times past had embittered their minds against the declining establishment.

The attachment of some of the Clergy to the cause of the king subjected the Church itself to suspicion, and gave further occasion to its enemies to seek its destruction. The dispute about Church property now came on, and for twenty-seven years was waged with bitterness and violence. At the commencement of the war of the Revolution, Virginia had ninety-one Clergymen, officiating in one hundred and sixty-four Churches and Chapels; at its close only twenty-eight ministers were found laboring in the less desolate parishes of the State. Whither numbers of them had fled, and to what secular pursuits some of them had betaken themselves, it is not in our power to state. Had they been faithful shepherds, they would not have thus deserted their flocks. We come now to the efforts of the more faithful, though faint-hearted ones, to strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die.

In common with some other Dioceses, the Church in Virginia resolved on an effort to obtain consecration from abroad for a Bishop who might complete her imperfect organization. A very worthy man, the Rev. Dr. Griffith, was selected for the purpose; but so depressed was her condition, so little zeal was found in her members, that though for three successive years calls were made upon the parishes for funds to defray his expenses to England, only twenty-eight pounds were raised, a sum altogether insufficient for the purpose, so that the effort on his part was abandoned through poverty and domestic affliction.

Even at a subsequent period, when renewed efforts, prompted by shame at past failures, and a sense of duty to the Church, were made to secure what was necessary for Bishop Madison's consecration, a sufficiency, even with some foreign aid, was not obtained to pay all the necessary expenses of the voyage. The object, however, was accomplished, and at the end of almost two hundred years from the establishment of a most imperfect Church in Virginia a Bishop was obtained.

But she was too far gone, and there were too many opposing difficulties for her revival at that time. From the addresses of Bishop Madison to the Episcopalians of Virginia, it will be seen that he entered on his duties with no little zeal and with very just views of the kind of men and measures necessary for the work of revival. He plainly admits the want of zeal and fidelity in many of the ministers as one of the causes of the low condition of the Church, and that the contrary qualifications were indispensable to her resuscitation. He made an ineffectual

effort at bringing back into the bosom of the Church the followers of Mr. Wesley, for they had now entirely separated from her.

After a few partial visitations of the Diocese, his hopes of the revival of the Church evidently sunk; and the duties of the College of William and Mary, of which he was President, requiring his attention during the greater part of the year, at the Convention of 1805, he called for a Sufragan or Assistant Bishop. The subject was referred to the next year's Convention, but no such meeting was held, nor was there another until after his death. For seven years it seemed as if the worst hopes of her enemies and most painful fears of her friends were about to be realized in her entire destruction. In the General Convention of the Church, held in the city of New Haven in 1811, there was no representation, nor any report whatever from Virginia, but the following entry is found on the journal, "they fear, indeed, that the Church in Virginia is, from various causes, so depressed, that there is danger of her total ruin, unless great exertions, favored by the blessing of Providence, are employed to raise her."

During the ensuing spring Bishop Madison died, and shortly after a Convention of the Clergy and Laity was invited by Dr. Buchanan, at the instance of the Rev. Dr. Wilmer and myself, both of us then ministering in Alexandria, for the purpose of electing a Bishop. Important as was the object, and imperious as was the necessity of such a meeting in order to the existence of the Church, only thirteen Clergymen, and about as many Laymen, were found, who had interest enough in the cause to come together. The result was the election of Dr. Bracken to the vacant Episcopate, who, however, declined at the ensuing Convention. At that Convention, only eight Clergymen and ten Laymen met together for a few hours around a table in one of the committee rooms of the Capitol, in Richmond, and when they separated, scarce expected ever to meet again for ecclesiastical purposes.

During the following year, however, in the good providence of God, circumstances arose which led to further efforts. The Monumental Church, built on the ruins of the Richmond Theatre, needed a minister; and the minds of a few individuals interested for a suitable supply for that interesting station, and also for the vacant Episcopate, were by a most gracious overruling Providence directed to one at a distance, personally unknown to any, and only by good report to a very few. I need not add that the person alluded to was the good Bishop Moore, so long the affectionate pastor of one of the Churches in Richmond, and the beloved Bishop of Virginia. At the Convention, however, which elected him, only seven Clergymen were present. It would thus appear, that after the lapse of two hundred years, the Church of Virginia was reduced to about the same number of ministers, which served at her altars during the first ten years of her existence. And is it wonderful that many, even of sincere friends, should think that the effort at resuscitation must be fruitless, and that enemies poured derision upon the same. I well remem-

ber, even some years after this, and when our prospects had brightened not a little, as I presented a petition to that great and good man, Chief Justice Marshall, a true friend to the Church, asking a contribution to our Seminary, that, although with his accustomed liberality, he freely gave, he yet accompanied the gift with a remark, "that it seemed almost cruel to tempt young men to enter the ministry of a Church which was too far gone ever to be recovered." But he lived long enough to rejoice in his mistake, and to see children, and children's children, blessed by the fruits of an Institution which he feared might be worse than useless. I may be permitted to add, that when the Church of Virginia, at an early period, wished to unite sister Dioceses with her in the great work of ministerial education, it was made an objection to the proposal, that her morals and religion were so corrupt, that it would be unsafe to trust such an institution within her borders. We wonder not at such reproaches, although they may sometimes have come with an ill grace from those who made them, seeing that the whole Church largely partook of the same corruption. I can remember too well the time when, in every educated young man of Virginia, I was prepared to meet a sceptic, if not a scoffer. At the time of my first ordination, by Bishop Madison, about a year before his death, although it took place on a bright Sabbath morning, only about fifteen gentlemen, young and old, and two ladies, were present in the old and venerable church of Williamsburg. More of the young men indeed did I meet on my way to the Church, with guns on their shoulders and dogs at their sides, going into the fields and woods in search of game, than were to be found in the Church itself.

And what more could be expected from the character of the Clergy generally at that time, or for a long time before. It is a melancholy fact that many of them had been addicted to the race-field, the card-table, the ball-room, the theatre—nay, more, to the drunken revel. One of them, about the very period of which I am speaking, was, and had been for years, the President of a Jockey Club. Another, after abandoning the ministry, fought a duel in sight of the very Church in which he had performed the solemn offices of religion. Nothing was more common, even with the better portion of them, than to celebrate the holy ordinance of Baptism, not amidst the prayers of the congregation, but the festivities of the feast and the dance, the minister sometimes taking a full share in all that was going on. These things being so, and the Churches having been, on account of such things, almost entirely deserted, or else occupied by those who only held our Zion up to derision, what but a firm conviction of God's watchful providence over her could keep alive hope in the most ardent of her friends? How often, in looking at the present comparative prosperity of the Church, do we say, surely God must have greatly loved this branch of his Holy Catholic Church, or he would not have borne so long with her unfaithfulness, and so readily forgiven her sins.

It becomes us, my Brethren, with deep humility and lively gratitude, to compare



together our past and present condition, and say "what hath God wrought?" If, towards the close of two hundred years, there were nearly one hundred ministers and one hundred and sixty Churches, and then in seven years after only a few faint-hearted ones, serving in the few remaining and almost deserted sanctuaries; now again, after the labors of only one-third of a century, our hundred ministers are restored, and one hundred and sixty churches at least are open for the people of God. If for two hundred years not a Bishop ever visited the Diocese, and even after one was sent, only a few ministrations were performed; now two Bishops have full employment in visiting nearly two hundred Churches or stations. If it was for years found impracticable to raise sufficient funds for the consecration of one Bishop; now funds are raised for the annual support of two, independent of parochial charges. If it was once proposed in a declining state of the Church, but in vain, to raise funds for the education of only two candidates for the ministry; now more than fifty are receiving preparatory instruction at our Seminary. Whereas formerly we were entirely dependent on foreign parts for our supply of Clergymen, insufficient as to numbers, and worse as to character; now by the blessing of God on our Seminary we are enabled to send forth to the decayed Churches, or to the heathen of Europe, Asia, and Africa, a goodly number of faithful and zealous missionaries of the cross. Whereas formerly and for at least a century, numbers were deserting our communion, as that which had deserted God, and was deserted of God; now, for the last thirty years or more, either themselves or their children, or children's children, have in considerable numbers been returning to our fold, as to one which God himself was keeping and blessing. Whereas once, almost all men thought and spoke ill of our Clergy and communicants, as devoid of piety; now, only those who are misinformed, or most prejudiced, refuse to acknowledge that through God's grace there is at least as large an amount of true piety in both priests and people, as is to be found in those of any other denomination. Whereas, once, we had for many years no conventions, and then for some years a few faint-hearted ministers and people meeting together; now, what numbers of Clergy and Laity delight to assemble, not for the dry business of legislation only, or for religious controversy, but chiefly for the blessed privilege of joining hearts and voices in the sweet exercises of God's word and worship, and thus becoming knit together in love.

Thus graciously hath God dealt with us. But does it not, out of gratitude to God, and that we may continue to enjoy his smiles, become us to enquire by what means this hath been done; how our Jacob arose, when he was not only so small, but crushed to the earth, trodden under foot of man, after having been betrayed by friends, and dishonored by the very ministers of God who were appointed to defend him. In the character, habits, views and history of the man whom God sent to us from a distance, to be our head and leader in this work, and in the views of



those, whether from our own State or elsewhere, who entered into the service, may be seen the religious principles and methods of action, by which, under God, the change has been effected; and it need not be said, how entirely different they were from those by which the disgrace and downfall of the Church had been wrought. Of the efficacy of these means, we are the more convinced, from the peculiar and very great difficulties to be surmounted, which have nevertheless, in a great measure, been surmounted. We are persuaded that, in no part of our own land, were such strong prejudices, and such violent oppositions to be overcome, as in Virginia, in consequence of the former character of the Episcopal Clergy, and the long and bitter strife which had existed between the Church and those who had left its pale, which latter were never satisfied until the downfall of the former was accomplished.

Let me briefly allude to the means used. Bishop Moore, in his previous correspondence, and his first sermon and address, declared his determination to preach as he had ever done, when God so greatly blessed his ministry, the glorious doctrines of grace, instead of a mere morality, such as many of the English Clergy had once preached, and such as had been but too common in Virginia. The young clergy, who engaged in the revival of the church of Virginia, took the same resolve, and made the great theme of their preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified, on the ground of a total apostacy from God on the part of man, which required such a sacrifice, as well as the renewing of the Holy Ghost, in order to meetness for the joys of Heaven. But they did not turn this grace of God into licentiousness, and think that either priest or people might indulge in sin. Among the first acts of the earlier Conventions, it will be seen that it was at once set forth before the world, that the revival of the Church was to be undertaken on principles entirely different from those which had hitherto prevailed, and under the influence of which religion had been so dishonored. It was plainly declared that there was need of discipline both for clergy and laity; and canons were provided for the exercise of the same. Not merely were grosser vices stigmatised, but, what by some were considered the innocent amusements of the world, and which the Clergy themselves had advocated and practised, were condemned as inconsistent with the character of a Christian Professor.

Baptism, by which we renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, as well as the sinful lusts of the flesh, and which had been customarily celebrated in private, directly in opposition to the rubric, and often amidst ungodly festivities, was now sought to be performed only in the house of God, and with pious sponsors, instead of thoughtless and irreligious ones. Candidates for confirmation, instead of being presented because they had reached a certain age, and could repeat the catechism, were told what a solemn vow, promise and profession they were about to make, and that it was none other than an immediate introduction with full qualifica-

tion to the Lord's Supper. Of course, very different views of the Lord's Supper, and the conduct of communicants were inculcated, and the Minister even bound, by express canon, to converse with each one, before admitting him for the first time to the Lord's Supper. Thus, were the whole tone and standard of religion changed, to the dissatisfaction and complaint, it is true, of some of the old members of the Church, and not without condemnation of some from abroad.

In due time, the important measure of requiring that all who enter our Convention to legislate for Christians and Christian Ministers, should themselves be Christian professors, was adopted, though there were those at home, who feared the attempt, and there were those abroad, who prophesied evil in such a manner as to encourage disaffection at home. But God was with us, and has granted most entire success.

As to the manner of exciting zeal in Christians, and awakening interest in those who were not, it was thought that no better example could be followed, than that of the Apostles, who preached not only in the temple and synagogues, but, in some places, from house to house, as occasion required, and opportunity offered. As to the manner of preaching, written sermons were generally preferred in the pulpit; extemporaneous exhortations were often resorted to in smaller assemblies; and, without slighting the excellent prayers of our Liturgy, there were many occasions, both in private families, and in social meetings, when extemporaneous petitions seemed edifying both to the pastor and his flock. As to the great benevolent and religious institutions of the age, our Ministers felt that they were doing well to encourage their people to a lively participation in them. The Missionary and Bible Societies, the Colonization and Temperance Societies especially, received their most cordial support, and they considered it a subject of devout thankfulness to God, if their congregations took a deep interest in the same.

To provoke each other and their congregations to zeal in all good works, and especially to awaken the careless to a sense of their lost condition, the Ministers would meet together occasionally, and for several successive days, make full trial of prayer and God's word, expecting the blessing promised to two or three who come together and ask somewhat of God.

To these, I will only add a few words as to the spirit cherished, and the course pursued towards our Christian brethren who walk not with us in all things of Church order and worship.

We have seen how long and bitter the strife that subsisted between them and our fathers, how violent the prejudices that raged against us; and it would have been easy to enter on the work of revival in the spirit of retaliation and fierce opposition. But would it have been right, and as our Master would have had us do? Had not our forefathers done religion and them some wrong? Had not God made much use of them for good to religion? Were they not most sincere in their fear

of us, and opposition to us? Did it not become us rather to win them over by love, and secure their esteem by living and preaching differently from our predecessors?

Such was the conciliatory course pursued by our deceased Father in God, and followed by those who perceived the good effects of his example; and most happy was the effect of the same.

And now, brethren, are there any who, in view of the past, and of God's blessing upon the doctrines preached, and the measures adopted, would, for a moment, listen to the proposal of a change? More especially, when we remember, that in the course adopted by us, we only followed closely in the footsteps of a noble host of faithful Ministers and Laymen in our Mother Church, who, during the last fifty years, have been so successfully engaged in the work of her revival. Though not so deeply corrupted as the Church of Virginia, yet was the English Church most sadly defective, both in doctrine and practice. But God raised up the Venns, Newtons, Scotts, Cecils, Martins, Buchannans, among the Clergy, and the Wilberforces, Thorntons, Grants, and Hannah Moores, among the Laity, to bear their testimony against the jejune morality of the pulpit, and to condemn, as well by their writings as example, the worldliness both of Clergy and people in that day. And what a blessed change has been effected! None pretend, for a moment, to question either the effect or the cause thereof. And yet, alas! so fickle, so fond of various experiment is man, there are not a few, who, within the last twelve years, while lavishing praises on those who were the chief instruments of the happy change, have yet proposed to do more good by means and instruments widely different from those which Heaven has so greatly blessed for the last half century. I need not tell of the confusion, discord and unhappiness already produced by the unwise experiment, and the injury our Church is suffering thereby. We, my brethren of the Clergy and Laity, will keep to the old ways, assured that he, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," will continue to bless us as he has done, and yet more abundantly, if we will only be more faithful in those ways.

And while we have reason at thought of our present, by comparison with our past condition, to exclaim "what hath God done," "to thank Him and take courage," yet should we beware of boasting, or of supposing that all is done, or that what remains will certainly and easily be done. I consider it as the great error of many in our Church, throughout the land, that we are too much given to boasting, too apt to overrate our own successes, and calculate too largely on far greater, while underrating the present or probable future successes of others. God will, in his own way, correct us if we be guilty of presumption. Our Jacob is still small, and it becomes us now, as of old, to ask, by whom shall he arise? Much is there yet to be done, and there are many difficulties in the way. Though we have a goodly number of Ministers, yet by no means enough to carry on the work of enlargement as we could wish, and as the door seems opening to us.

Although we have many Churches, yet how many of the congregations are small, and not rapidly increasing, being still unable to afford even a moderate support to the Ministry.

Many are the discouragements which meet us in our efforts to sustain some of the old, and to raise up new congregations. Among the most painful is the difficulty of attaching the poor of this world to our communion. When our Lord was on earth, he gave, as one of the signs of his heavenly descent, the blessed fact, that "to the poor the Gospel is preached," and "the common people, it is written, heard him gladly;"—"the multitudes followed him." Such should be our constant endeavor, my brethren of the Clergy; and if, from the causes alluded to in the past history of our Church, one description of the poor of Virginia have been almost entirely alienated from us, let us rejoice to know that there is another description not less acceptable in the sight of Heaven, who, if we are kind to them, and will take due pains to win them over, will more easily be led to come under the faithful preaching of the word. The poor servants will, if we persevere in our labors of love towards them, and be to them what God's faithful pastors in every age have been to the poor, be benefitted by our Ministry, and may, if we will, in conjunction with their owners, attend to them betimes as we do to our own children, become regular and pious members of our communion. But whether we think of the rich, or the poor, or those of any and every condition and character amongst us, with the hope of converting them to Christ, and attaching them to the communion of our Church, we need not expect much success, without much zeal and diligence, such as was put forth in our first efforts for its resuscitation. Our State is not one of those whose population is rapidly increasing, in which flourishing villages are springing up in every direction, calling for neat Churches to fill up the measure of their beauty and excellency, and where the support of the Ministry is sure, so that our Zion must needs lengthen her chords, and strengthen her stakes. Very different is it with us now, has it been for many years, and will it in all probability be, for many years to come. It is only by patient perseverance in well-doing, that we can hope to make advances in the establishment of our Church. Much self-denial, and enduring of hardship, and abounding in labors, and itinerant zeal, and contentedness with a little of this world's goods, on the part of many of our Ministers, are indispensable to the growth of the Church in Virginia, much beyond her present attainment. Without these things, she may continue stationary, or even retrograde in some places, during years to come. The want of such Ministers, and the pressing demands of our Missionary Societies, and of vacant places in other Dioceses, depriving us of a number of our young men, and of some of those more advanced in life, have left us, during the last year or two, with a larger number of destitute places than usual, which I fear will not be supplied during the present year. In addition to these



difficulties in the way of our rapid progress, requiring great zeal and self-denial in order to advancement, I should suppress the truth, were I not to say, that recent circumstances in the history of our own and Mother Church have contributed not a little to revive old prejudices and former opposition, which, for the last thirty years, had been gradually and happily subsiding, under the faithful preaching, and peaceable, conciliatory deportment of our Ministers. The cry of false doctrine and Romish tendencies has been renewed under circumstances well calculated to mislead the judgments of many good people, who are not so well qualified to distinguish between the errors of individuals and the positive corruptions of a Church. There are those, who, of course, would make use of these circumstances to our injury, the temptation being too strong for poor human nature entirely to resist. And in what spirit, and with what weapons shall we meet and contend with this old enemy, now risen up with renovated strength against us? Surely it becomes us to remember in what manner, and with what success, old prejudices were put down, and former opposition in a measure disarmed. Let us adopt the same method now, when we would overcome a less formidable foe, for it cannot be, that prejudice now exists to the same extent as formerly. Making all allowance for honest prejudice, and little regarding any other, let us, in the spirit of Christian kindness and patience, set forth the true doctrines of our Church, as established by the Reformers, and their conformity with Scripture, more emphatically than ever.

Let us avoid as much as possible all contention, not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, and thus, as in former times, commend our Church to the hearts and judgments of the pious and peaceable. I well know the difficulty of this in some places, and under some circumstances, but am not the less persuaded of the duty, because of its difficulty, and the temptations to an opposite course.

To conclude. In urging you, my Brethren, to an adherence to those modes of exhibiting truth, and those means of advancing religion, which, in our Mother Church, and in the Church of Virginia, have been so blessed of Heaven; in warning you against changes in this time of innovation; you will not understand me as intimating that those who were first engaged in the work were incapable of error, and that no improvement could be made, neither that circumstances being changed in the progress of events, there might not be some modifications in the manner of promoting the same great object.

I am well aware of the folly of supposing that any one age or generation can be an unerring standard of truth and holiness. I admit the justness of the wise son of Sirach's warning, "say not that the former times were better than these, for thou speaketh not wisely concerning this thing." I admit, with readiness and gratitude, a






general improvement in the condition of mankind, as to morals and religion, not only since my own recollection and observation, but for a much longer previous period. I dissent entirely from those who can see nothing but deterioration in the history of man, either in our own, or other lands. I see the very reverse of it in all Protestant Christendom, and even in some parts of the corrupt Church of Rome. Nevertheless, I cannot close my eyes to the fact, that some in the Episcopal Church of England and America, in their desire for its rapid extension, and its universal prevalence, and in their haste to attain some ideal perfection of unity, have embraced exploded errors, and subjected the whole Church to the charge of retracting its steps towards apostate Rome. In this, and in the vigorous and too successful efforts of Romanists to regain some of their lost power, we may perhaps see the approach of that last fearful conflict between truth and error, which is, happily, however, to be of short duration, and to end in a sure victory to the former. However this may be, my Brethren, and whether we shall see, or be engaged in this battle or not, one thing is certain, that we cannot be too earnest in our endeavors, each one, after personal holiness. We need not fear as an innovation or presumption, the attempt to be more holy than any who have gone before us, provided only, that we go by the rule of God's word. Neither can we be too zealous and faithful in preaching according to the law and testimony. If, in any thing, any of us find that we have erred, laying too much or too little comparative emphasis on doctrines, duties, ordinances, promises, threatenings, or any thing pertaining to the whole council of God; of course it is our duty, by the unerring word, to correct the same, not without a careful regard to the warning and instructive voice of history, which shows how prone some have been to give to the mint, the anise and cummin of religion, that regard which is due only to the weightier matters of the law.





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